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RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6750
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4483
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3102
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7629
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1701
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5037
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1244
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7369

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000384

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAQ OPRC SY
SUBJECT: Syria/Russia, Syria/Qatar, Syria/Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon,
Palestinian Territories, Sudan
(4/20-23)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Apr. 20 reported President Asad's meeting on Apr. 19 with the Russian President Putin's Special Envoy, Alexander Sultanov, who conveyed a message from Putin about bilateral relations and the situation in the region. Talks focused on the situation in Iraq, and on the necessity to ensure security and stability there, and also to encourage the Lebanese parties to reach national accord and solve their differences on various issues.

Talks also centered on ways to revive peace efforts in the region to cement a just and comprehensive peace.

Papers on Apr. 23 reported FM Mouallem's meeting on Apr. 22 with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr al-Thani, focusing on bilateral relations and the latest developments in Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon, in addition to efforts to achieve security and stability in the region. Mouallem reiterated the importance of continuing consultation, cooperation and coordination on all issues that concern both countries.

Papers on Apr. 23 reported Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad's meeting on Apr. 22 with Andi Mapata Hang Fatwa, Deputy Chairman of the Indonesian Consultative Council. Miqdad described Syrian-Indonesian relations as "important and deep," hailing Indonesia's positions and its support of just and fair causes through its membership on the UN Security Council. Talks also touched on bilateral relations and means of boosting them, in addition to the latest developments in the region. Mr. Fatwa emphasized that "Indonesian positions regarding the situation in the Middle East are identical to those of Syria." He renewed his country's support of Syria in its efforts to liberate the occupied Golan, and condemned Israeli practices against Syrian citizens in Golan.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Foreign Minister Mouallem reviews latest developments and Syrian-Qatari relations with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr al-Thani" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/23)

"President Asad receives a message from Putin. Sultanov: Russian-Syrian points of view are identical" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/20)

"A message to President Asad from Indian Prime Minister received by VP Shara" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/20)

"Italian Prime Minister Prodi: Syria has an important role in achieving peace in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/22)

"US Department of State does not rule out a Syrian-American meeting during the Sharm al-Sheikh Conference" (Independent al-Watan, 4/23)

"Generals of war: Failure of the security plan in Baghdad is possible. Killing of three US soldiers and scores of Iraqis in various areas in Baghdad" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/23)

"Palestinian bloodshed in Jenin. Scores of Palestinians killed and injured in Israeli assaults. The Palestinian Authority calls for severing contacts with Israel" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/23)

"President Bush and the Congress head towards confrontation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/23)

"\$65 million (US) worth of American bombs to Israel" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/22)

"Will the high walls and time wasting strategy succeed in Iraq? One US soldier killed, two others wounded during the visit of US Defense Secretary Gates to Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/21)

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"Assistant UN Secretary General Michel continues his meetings in Lebanon amid Israeli airspace violations. Lebanese Opposition: The governing team seeks internationalization and mandating"

(Government-owned Tishreen, 4/21)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Why This Rush?"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned al-Thawra, wrote (4/20): "Why this US and French pressure and rush to endorse the law on the International Tribunal on the al-Hariri assassination in its current formula and outside the constitutional frameworks in Lebanon...?"

"This shows that the ruling team in Lebanon, supported by Paris and Washington, and behind them Israel, is determined to politicize the tribunal to achieve political purposes that have no connection whatsoever with the objective of finding al-Hariri's killers...."

"Israel wants to take revenge on the resistance and push Lebanon toward a civil war, while France has personal and other objectives linked to its new colonialist ambitions...."

"As for the United States, it sees Lebanon in general and the tribunal in particular as the way to its new Middle East plan despite the failure that accompanies this plan in the region...."

"Regrettable, Indeed"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (4/20): "The United Nations acknowledged, in the Geneva conference on helping Iraqi refugees, that Iraqis are experiencing tragedies around the clock...."

"The United States raises a hue and cry over an individual or a group of individuals it likes if they are aggrieved in some way or another. It makes threats and mobilizes the United Nations, the Security Council, and Chapter Seven. It legitimizes the illegitimate and violates the sovereignty of countries and the freedom of nations and individuals. But when it comes to its victims, the millions of humans in Iraq, no one has the right to ask why this is happening, although it has reached the level of a human tragedy.

"The United States and Britain occupied Iraq using formidable military power. They destroyed the country's infrastructure and opened the doors wide for acts of killing and looting. So they alone are legally and ethically responsible for the human tragedies and the heinous crimes that take place in the country. This dictates that everyone tell them loudly: You deliberately destroyed Iraq and you have to mend what you spoiled and atone for the crimes you committed against a people and an independent country member of the United Nations. It is really regrettable that they have not been told this...."

"Words that Have No Credit"

Muhammad Ali Buzah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/20): "Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's talk about negotiations over the Arab peace plan was meant for consumption and to remarket Israel and polish its image, which hit rock bottom against the background of its bloody terrorism, crimes, and violations....

"Israeli leaders are used to maneuvers and deception, and Israel has

always been a factor of chaos, tension, and wars, not a factor of peace and stability....

"It is an illusion to count on Israel's talk about peace.... The road to peace is known, and international resolutions and the Security Council are the shortest and easiest way to achieve it.... "Without this, there will be no stability and the situation in the region will remain open to all possibilities and disastrous repercussions...."

"Insistence on Failure"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned al-Thawra, wrote (4/22): "The US Defense secretary warned the Iraqi government that the security responsibility of the American troops will not run forever....

"The American secretary suggests that his country has nothing to do with the lack of security and other elements of life in Iraq....

"If US occupation forces refuse to withdraw from Iraq and at the same time refuse to control security, then what are they doing? Why are they staying in Iraq, especially since their presence is a factor of division and friction among the Iraqis...?"

"Iraqis Do not Look for Repatriation; This Is no Solution"

Muhyi al-Din al-Muhammad, an editorialist in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (4/22): "It was not surprising for the 27 members of the European Union to declare their opposition to the idea of repatriating a number of Iraqis who had been forcibly displaced and

are now present in Jordan, Syria, and neighboring countries....

"Everyone, including the Americans and Europeans, has returned to open a dialogue with Syria on the problems of Iraq and the problems of the region. This return is not to exchange benefits and to conclude deals as some suspect politicians like to portray it. This return is due to the fact that these politicians have become convinced of the soundness and correctness of the Syrian stand and of the farsightedness that Syria's policies enjoy. Syria does not spare any effort to strengthen national security as well as Arab and regional security. Its opposition to the occupation of Iraq before it took place and its opposition to the continuation of the occupation or the division of Iraq are not meant to achieve narrow gains. They are meant to safeguard the interests of the Iraqi people and the interests of the peoples of the region. They are meant to safeguard Arab, regional, and international security as well as the security of the people of the United States itself who are plagued with an extremist administration...."

"Bush Is not Entrusted with Sudan"

Ali Nasrallah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (4/22): "President Bush stated that his patience toward Sudan has limits and that he is giving the Sudanese president a last chance to comply with the demands of the international community...."

The US president used arrogant imperial language and encroached upon a sovereign and independent country..... Regardless of the situation in Darfur, no one in the world can accept this language, which goes

beyond all bounds of tact and diplomacy....

"No one can believe that the perpetrator of crimes in Iraq has compassion for the people of Sudan and Darfur...."

Corbin